

Winner of the RE:LEAF Urban Forestry Award:

The Balfour Street Resident's Group, the Elephant Amenity Network and Forestbank

The award was given for effective partnership working between local community groups, developers and a local authority.

The project was deemed the most innovative and effective community action to protect the urban forest in London.



Celia Cronin, Guy and Elba Mannes-Abbott, Sanna Wennberg [holding Almanac Mannes-Abbott] and Norma Lawrence receiving the award from John Simpson, BBC World Affairs Editor and Matthew Pencharz, The Mayor of London's Environment Advisor at the London Living Room, City Hall on the 15th May 2013

Guy Mannes-Abbott said: "I can't exaggerate how pleased we are to have won this award for 'innovative campaigning'. Indeed, for sharing the 'secret' of an inner city forest largely hidden behind a high-walled social housing estate. A forest planted with great foresight by Borough architects in the 1970s."

About the project

We objected to the casually disastrous approach in the Regeneration Agreement for the Elephant and Castle, in particular towards its maturing forest. So began a campaign to value it and force the regeneration partners to rethink: to remove planned new roads and retain or replace the canopy value of the trees.

In 2010 we lacked planning/policy precedents and had a real battle to unnerve the developers sufficiently to have strategic effect. Our high-profile campaign was based around a People's CAVAT of the forest, weekly walks leading hundreds of people around the site, telling stories of the place and related protest. We named parts of the forest, conducted spot-valuations and hosted a range of Urban Forest School events.

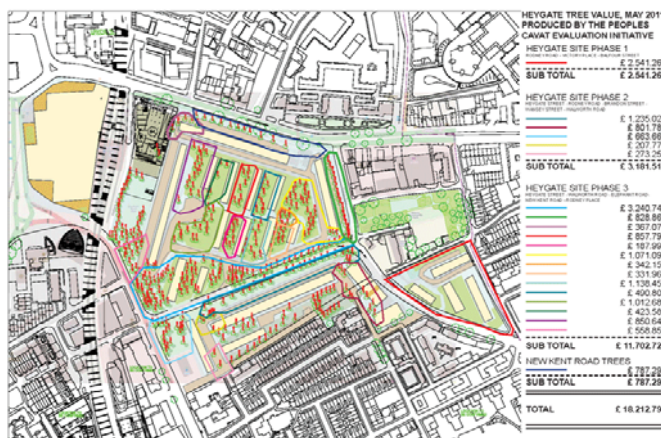
Our CAVAT survey revealed massive under-valuing of the forest by the LA and forced the developer to conduct a survey which produced identical values, tree by tree, to ours.

They then redrew the masterplan, adding-in a large park around retained trees, restoring on-site and promising 1200 replacements beyond it, radiating through surrounding streets, exactly as we had campaigned for.

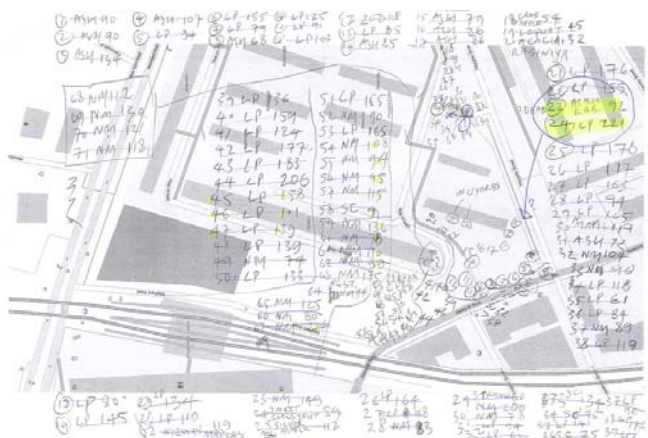
The Forestbank will archive the story of this campaign and function as an educative, campaigning portal to secure commitments made here and expand from the site itself into central London's broader forest.



Heygate Estate's Secret Forest, a key image in the campaign. ©SannaWennberg



Heygate Forest Actual Amenity Values, includes trees within and around the site. ©SannaWennberg



Hand measuring the forest tree by tree January 2011 ©GuyMannes-Abbott

Our achievements were possible only with the commitments of Sanna, Celia, Norma, Mara, Adrian, Jerry, Seeta, Tom, Jon, Luke, Chris, Lili, Jason, Rastko, and Elba as well as those who contributed research, contacts, web-design, physical support and presence to what began as an impossible objective. Serious work remains but it would be churlish not to acknowledge Lend Lease for abruptly changing course.

Further information

- www.Forestbank.org
- email: leaf@Forestbank.org
- twitter: @leaftoleaf
- The [RE:LEAF Partnership](#)

The 2013 Awards were organised by the Forestry Commission and Mayor of London, received sponsorship from Gristwood & Toms, Woodland Trust and Barcham Trees, and had assistance from a range of RE:LEAF partners

